

Fortunes On The Football Pools

Introduction

Although it seems likely that the football pools as we know them are a Swiss invention, the British system was introduced by one Mr. Jervis, whose business began in a very small way shortly after World War 1. Week after week, punters in his home city Birmingham, paid pennies in hopes of winning the princely sum of £2. The first of the big firms, Littlewoods, arrived in the mid-1920s, followed by Vernons just a few years later, and Zetters in 1933. Many companies followed, only to find themselves unable to attract any real share of a rapidly expanding market increasingly dominated by the three main companies. One by one the challengers were swallowed up by their larger competitors. Although doing the pools has always promised riches to some lucky customer, it wasn't until relatively recently that the opportunity to become an instant millionaire presented itself, when in 1976 the first million pounds was won by Margaret Francis of Wiltshire who shared her win. The first outright instant millionaire was a Bexley housewife who, just a few months later, received her million with a handsome £32,000 bonus. Today the Treble Chance attracts an estimated 98% of pools entries; consequently it is the one we focus on here.

Explaining the Treble Chance

To be successful the punter must accumulate 24 points from however many crosses he places on the coupon. Look in any national or regional mid-week paper and you'll find that the majority of really big jackpot wins are awarded for 24 points. But not always, and where a large number of draws (score or no-score) occur at any one time, one frequently finds many entries sharing a jackpot payout, sometimes reducing individual awards to almost insignificant levels. Conversely, where draws are few, a major jackpot win might be awarded to a handful of entrants, sometimes a lone winner who achieves the highest possible number of points that week, frequently 23. It has been lower. Consequently, the lower the number of draws scored and the harder they are to forecast, the higher the potential awards and the fewer likely recipients. Where Those 24 Points Come From: Typically, we are aiming to forecast as many score draws (3 points each) as possible, and maybe a couple of no-score draws (2 points each). Spotting 8 score draws means scoring 8×3 points = the magic figure 24. Where you forecast 7 jackpot match draws and 1 no-score match draw points are awarded thus: $7 \times 3 = 21$ $1 \times 2 = 2$ Total = 23. The Treble Chance was introduced to make the job of winning the jackpot harder and thereby provide higher rewards for a lucky few. It seems to work!

Inflation and the Football Pools

The following changes in maximum jackpot prizes reflect the effects of inflation over the years:

1950 - £100,000
1957 - £200,000
1959 - £300,000
1971 - £400,000
1972 - £500,000
1979 - £750,000
1986 - £1,000,000
1990 - £1,500,000
1991 - £2,000,000

Today, in theory, you can win £3,300,000 (including bonuses).

Theories of Pools Forecasting

In the early days of the football pools, mathematical permutations were the usual forecasting method, mostly devised by statistics experts and guaranteed to win at least one prize every season for anyone using the formula. Later forecasters followed form, attempting to predict current team and individual ability, past performance, sometimes taking into account grounds, weather and pitch conditions, distance the away team travels, and so on. By reasoning, opponents of this forecasting technique argue that very few major prizes will be awarded to students of form, simply because too many people having access to the very same information increases shares in the payout.

Forecasting 1990s Style

Various forecasting theories are popular today, some adopted exclusively, others blended to give a unique method known only to their inventors. Here, we can but advise on most popular forecasting methods, which readers must make their selection from based on time available, inclination and access to appropriate information. Important Point: Forecasting methods considered here are not designed to increase your chances of winning but to decrease your chances of not winning. All will shortly become clear as we highlight the main theories known to have resulted in major wins over the past few years.

Past Performance (Form)

Exponents here attempt to predict patterns and trends which might have a bearing on future results. Most commonly, individual and team performance records are studied in detail, usually over the entire season, sometimes several. Books to help you analyse past performance include the ever-popular News of the World Football Annual, which in over 400 pages lists everything there is to know about earlier seasons, including players, coaches, matches played, scores, scorers, even players dates and places of birth for those who work with horoscopes, biorhythms, lucky numbers. The tabloid and specialist football press, including Racing and Football Outlook,

provide updated information to make forecasting easier. Past performance can mean analysing recent matches, perhaps just the current season. Alternatively, it might mean going back over several seasons because, as one popular pools journalist reports: I am convinced that tradition plays as big a part as recent form in this fascinating game. Year after year, we find certain teams acting as veritable bogeys to other teams, even when the latter seems to have the best recent form.

Winners on Form:

Britain's first pools half-millionaire, Cecil Grimes, claimed that his eight predictions were all based on form. The following week a London syndicate collected over half a million pounds from carefully targeted predictions by a lady member.

Tips: Study as many published league tables as you can and analyse various aspects, including previous match results for particular opponents, what grounds have been lucky or otherwise for specific teams, what influence travelling has on a particular away team, and so on. Look for unusual influences on which you, and only you, can base future predictions.

Shock Factor

It is to shock draws that the majority of jackpots owe their being. Too many bankers - near-certain results - make for numerous winners to share in the proceeds. Include a few shock draws, for example a weak team drawing with a strong one on the latter's home ground, and you could have the jackpot all to yourself. Look for Shock Draws Among:

Teams currently suffering a long losing spell.

Underdog teams currently enjoying a winning spell.

Teams currently suffering a long run of bad luck, of whatever type. Even the worst spell of bad luck ends one day, usually in a draw.

Teams seeking revenge against their opponents, usually for a humiliating defeat at their last meeting.

Numbers Due (The Law of Averages)

Professional tipsters and forecasters, including statisticians, maintain that several patterns emerge when actual numbers on a football coupon are compared with the frequency of those numbers achieving draw results (score or no-score). Statistical research points to a number of factors which regularly determine whether a match will, or will not, result in a draw. Although averages change, at the time of writing, popular pools journalists suggest placing your

crosses against:

Home teams that have not drawn at home on the previous four or more consecutive occasions

Away teams that have not drawn away on the previous four or more consecutive occasions

Any of the first and last three teams in the league table, where the top three are playing away and the bottom three are at home

All matches where the previous meeting between the two teams resulted in a draw or one goal difference

Any team that lost in its last home match. Consecutive home defeats are rare

Away teams that lost their last match played at home

All matches where the home attack is weak and the away defence is strong

Coupon numbers that regularly result in a draw

Strong teams playing away and weak teams playing at home.

The Revenge Factor

Every dog has its day, or so they say, and it's surely no different for consistently losing and frequently humiliated teams. And should such humiliation arise in a match played at home, statistically the experts tell us, the chances of that team scoring a draw or win when it next meets the offending team are greatly enhanced. Pride also features highly in the increased chances many tipsters place on specific teams achieving a draw or win in certain matches. Fear of relegation, hints of future relegation, consistently bad press reviews, all can bring a regularly losing team back to winning form, usually starting with a draw.

Lucky Divisions

Some forecasters maintain that certain league divisions achieve more draws (score and no-score) than others. Exactly which divisions are involved might change over time and, as usual, there is no substitute for maintaining an ongoing analysis of those divisions where draws most frequently occur. The News of The World Football Annual, referred to several times in this report, will help you here. Using this forecasting method, the entrant is advised to limit his or her choices to just one or two divisions where the majority of crosses should be placed.

Lucky Grounds

Specific grounds prove lucky, and vice versa, for certain football teams. Luck, in fact, has a big part to play in winning: for the team and the pools enthusiast. Again, records of past wins, losses, incidents, and so on, will help you establish a pattern to work from in future games. The News of The World Football Annual - again - provides all this information for you. Things to watch out for here include underdog teams playing at grounds which have previously proved lucky for them, or consistently winning teams playing at grounds where they rarely win or draw.

Lucky Numbers

Lucky numbers are, in fact, the factor to which the majority of big wins are due. So says the Man from Littlewoods! So we feel justified in including this winning tactic in our report. Many winners confess to owing their fortunes simply from placing crosses against family birthdays, ages, house numbers, lucky numbers, and any other numbers that have proved lucky or significant for them. Try it, it works!

A Few Words About Syndicate Entries

In the end, however, the most likely way to substantially increase the odds of winning in your favour is by upping your stake and increasing the number of entries you make. This can be done on individual or syndicate entries. Syndicates are formed almost exclusively for the purpose of submitting multiple entries, and syndicate wins feature regularly in the winners lists.

As a syndicate member, you're never likely to achieve your own jackpot win, but now that we've reached a £2,000,000 plus level on the pools, your share of a major win can still reach a staggering six-figure fortune. Syndicates, in theory, are wonderful inventions. In practice they are fraught with complications, the most common of which is greed. Additionally, illness and absence causing participating members to miss a payment might conveniently be viewed as that person having fallen out of the syndicate, with the effect that the prize might now be shared between fewer participants.

A Few Words About Permutations Tables

Permutations tables aim to predict combinations of coupon numbers likely to result in a score or no-score draw. They usually take no account of individual or team form, and most rely purely on numbers and other statistical theories. This isn't to say that permutations tables do not occasionally yield major wins. They do, but usually only where the entrant has covered hundreds of lines on one coupon. Very costly! We do not recommend you use permutations tables! Neither do the pools companies!

Things You Should Know About The Football Pools

Research indicates that around 45% of pools entrants put their crosses anywhere. Some use a pin, others draw numbers out of a hat, some programme their computers to select numbers at random. And one major winner reports that her pools coupon got in the way of spilled tea which, when dried, left tiny marks where the tea leaves had landed. Using another coupon, she entered her crosses where the tea leaves had fallen, and won!

Less than 10% of winners follow form.

My winning contact reveals: Littlewoods told me the majority of winners make their selection based on birthdays, lucky numbers, even house numbers, ages and important dates in their lives.

Research indicates that long distances to travel to away matches can have a tremendously adverse effect on most teams, regardless of strength or league position. A strong team playing a fair distance from home might well be at a major disadvantage.

Most people put their crosses against teams high up in the league table, many place the majority of crosses at the top of the coupon. Placing yours lower in the table and towards the bottom half of the entry coupon mean less people to share in the subsequent payout.

Few people study midweek results which can have a great influence on Saturday's performance. Make a note of mid-week changes to form, luck, sickness and injuries.

Pointers to Success on the Football Pools

Forget about forecasting systems that promise immediate fortunes. If these plans really worked, their originators would be far too busy raking in the proceeds to consider selling their secrets to others. Moreover, if several people gain access to a plan which does work, individual shares will be low.

Do not chance an entry on a spoilt or defaced coupon. You will almost certainly be disqualified. Always get another coupon and start again. Better still, do a rough entry on one coupon, check it, and transfer the details carefully to another coupon. A photocopy is invaluable for this purpose.

Make sure your entry arrives on time. Use first class postage every time. Remember that Australian pools coupons usually have an earlier entry date than their British counterparts.

Remember to include your name and address and your entry fee! Sounds silly, but lots of people forget to include one or the other, sometimes all! And yes, there have been major wins which have

been forfeited this way.

Always look for teams and numbers to eliminate before forecasting from the remainder. Teams to eliminate include:

Consistently winning or losing teams. Remember, however, that these are likely candidates for shock draws and might be reconsidered once all bankers are identified.

All coupon numbers which rarely result in a draw.

All home teams with a higher league position than the away team. Again, consider these as prime candidates for shock draws.

Don't try to keep facts and figures, trends and events in your head. Start a notebook with a separate page for each team. Take notes, enter scores, and so on. Maintain scores for every team for every match played. Keep a separate sheet where results can be entered against coupon numbers. Look for draw-prone numbers, analyse which leagues attract most draws, and so on.

Pools Terms Defined

Cheques. Pools companies accept entry fees by cheque subject to conditions printed on the coupon. Subject to certain conditions payment by credit card or switch card is also permissible.

Claims. The pools companies sometimes ask for claims to be submitted for a 24pt line where there are 10 jackpot draws or less. Sometimes claims are invited for less than 24 points, depending on what draw results occur on the day. Note however that even if you fail to claim you will still be paid out.

Collectors. These are agents who collect coupons and entry fees for processing to the pools company. Sometimes newsagents and other retail outlets double as agency. The system is less costly than paying by cheque or postal order. But, note that, there have been occasions where agents have not processed money to pools companies and winners have not been recognised, or paid. Note too that the rules state that the collector is your agent, not the pools company's. On the whole, however, the system works pretty well and saves time, trouble and cost for participants.

Dividend. Sometimes Divi. This is the amount due to a winning line. The dividends of all pools companies are published around 11.00am each Wednesday. The amount of the dividend is determined by dividing money left in the pool after tax and commission by the number of winning entries.

Draw. A match where both teams score the same number of goals

or both teams fail to score.

Eight from Ten. The most common entry on the Treble Chance where entrants mark ten Xs in a column in the hope that at least 8 will be jackpot draws.

First or Top Dividend. Lines containing eight jackpot draws on the Treble Chance, thereby scoring 24 points (8×3). If no-one has achieved 8 jackpot draws, the first dividend can be won by a line with fewer points, sometimes 23, 22 or 21.

High Score Draw. Namely where both sides score two or more goals each. High score draws are worth 2.5 points each (jackpot draws score 3 points each and no-score draws earn 2 points each). No Publicity. Usually applied where entrants mark a X indicating they want no publicity in the event of winning the jackpot. Their wishes are honoured. And, contrary to popular opinion, including that X does not make you less likely to win.

Perm or Permutation. This means to combine and is usually applied to fancy tables which apparently show you exactly where to put those crosses to guarantee a pools win!

Stake. The amount of money gambled on each line in your entry.

Syndicate. A group of people who share the cost of a pools entry and divide any dividends.

Tax. Tax is not payable on a pools win. Tax is, however, deducted from the stake. But the pools company pays, not you.

Third Dividend. Paid to lines worth 23 points on the Treble Chance on weeks where there is a 24 points winner. Where there is no 24 points winner the First Dividend will usually go to anyone achieving 23 points.